

NSC BRIEFING

3 June 1954

INDOCHINA MILITARY SITUATION

I. Rapid redeployment of Viet Minh battle corps poses imminent threat to Tonkin delta.

A. Five Divisions from Dien Bien Phu expected to be in position around delta this week.

*lead B-
collocations* →

C. B. With short period of rest and resupply, could be ready for action by 15 June.

II. Following indications of possible enemy intent to attack delta noted:

A. Rapidity of divisions' return from Dien Bien Phu, although logical from worsening weather standpoint, could indicate plan for early offensive.

B. Training of 17 battalions at Thai Nguyen

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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NSA, DIA, STATE reviews completed

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

E. Recent shipments Chinese aid included six more rocket launchers, unspecified number recoilless rifles, and 3,300 rounds 105mm artillery ammo.

F. [Redacted] looks for major attack 15-20 June, says it's "almost certain."

A. He is pessimistic about holding Hanoi; fears enemy will concentrate on Hanoi-Haiphong rail-road lines and he won't be able to prevent permanent break.

B. If such break occurs, he does not "intend to have another Dien Bien Phu" and will withdraw to Haiphong bridgehead.

1. Hanoi dependent on daily coal supplies

to maintain electric light plant and all-important water purification system; already reported low in rice supplies due present Viet Minh harassment cities' communications.

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IV. General impression [redacted]

[redacted] is that delta, except for Haiphong bridgehead, can't last 30 days under major enemy attack.

V. [redacted] full attack on delta would bring no disintegration of French regular forces, even though their morale is poor.

A. However, Vietnamese troops would not be dependable.

VI. [redacted] we may see piecemeal employment of enemy battle corps in delta, rather than full-scale attack.

A. Thus, enemy could avoid head-on collision with heavier armed French forces and exposure to air attack on their concentrations.

VII. In face of critical situation, French are planning build-up, reorganization of delta defenses; say will try to hold all the delta. 25X1

A. [redacted] total delta infantry strength in near future will be 117 battalions.

B. Most important phase of plan is increase in mobile infantry battalions by as many as 15 battalions (to total 36) in immediate future.

C. Of these, 10 to 13 are coming from Laos.

D. Abandonment of some small, static posts will release additional troops for these mobile forces.

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E. French also plan to concentrate mobile strength in north of delta, leaving southern areas to Vietnamese forces.

1. Initially, though, mobile units will support Vietnamese in south.

(insert from p. 6) → F.
VIII. Laos, to be stripped of 10 to 13 battalions for reinforcing delta, faces possible rapid deterioration of security situation.

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A. Viet Minh regular strength in Laos, although only 10 battalions, expected to take advantage of French exodus and increase harassment of local forces. There also 8,000 irregulars.

B. Weak Laotian army totals 13 battalions. Also 2,500 auxiliaries.

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X. On the political side, disintegration in Vietnam being met ineffectually with old formulas.

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